



## **The Mac OS and the Year 2000: Approaching the New Millennium**

The year 2000 is rapidly approaching, and its impending arrival has computer industry observers bracing themselves for what is being heralded as a potential disaster of phenomenal proportions. That's the bad news.

The good news is that Apple Macintosh and Mac OS-compatible computers will have no problem working as expected well into the 21st century.

The problem is that most personal computer systems in use today are running operating systems based on a standard two-digit date format, typically MM/DD/YY for U.S.-based systems. This date format forces these operating systems to use two digits to represent and store the year. Simple, right? But a hypothetical comparison based on that format would falsely claim that the year 2000 (i.e., 00) falls before the year 1999 (i.e., 99). If the computer's system clock reads the date incorrectly, then all mission-critical applications and even scheduled backups are predicted to fail.

Take heart Apple fans! Since its introduction, the Macintosh has had the ability to correctly handle the year 2000 and beyond. This capability is due to the fact that since the first Macintosh 128K rolled off the production line in 1984, the Macintosh operating system used a 32-bit value to store seconds, starting at 12:00:00 a.m., January 1, 1904 and ending with 6:28:15 a.m. on February 6, 2040.

Okay, a quick self-administered test will reveal that in reality, the Date & Time control panel found in today's Mac OS enables users to enter dates only up to December 31, 2019. This was done to enable compatibility with the original Macintosh System 6.x General control panel, which only displayed a 2-digit year.

Before introducing the Macintosh, Apple delivered several models of the Apple II computer, a number of which are still in use today. The ability of Apple II computers to handle dates after the year 2000 vary by model. For example, an Apple IIgs, running System 6.0 or later and GS-specific software, should have no problems with dates

beyond the year 2000; whereas users of an Apple IIgs systems running 8-bit applications will need to load ProDOS 8 Version 2.0 or later to ensure that the applications continue to handle those dates correctly. The Apple II, II+, IIe, IIfx, and IIfx+ do not have a system clock, but third-party clocks are available that can correctly handle the year 2000 and beyond.

For more information on the Year 2000, check out these sites:

[The Year 2000 Information Center](#)  
[Claris and The Year 2000](#)

[Apple Websites](#)  
[The Tech Info Library](#)  
[Year 2000 Developer Technotes](#)  
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